

-S- Title: Delivering the Invitation

Theme: Telling Others About Jesus

Scripture: “And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, ‘All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. ¹⁹Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, ²⁰teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.’ ” (Matthew 28:18-20)

Have you ever given a party? The first step in planning a party is to make a list of all the people you want to invite. Next, you send invitations to all of the people that you want to come to your party. Your invitations might look like this one. **-S-** You put on a name, address, and a stamp on the envelope. Once you take the invitations to the Post Office and put in the mailbox, it is their job to deliver the invitations. The Post Office doesn't decide which invitations they will deliver and which ones they won't, do they? No, that would be silly. It is their responsibility to deliver all of the invitations that are mailed. The Post Office can't say, "We are pretty busy today, if we don't deliver these invitations, maybe someone else will tell the people about the party."

What if it is raining? Can the Post Office say, "It is raining today and if we go out to deliver these invitations, we might get wet so we will wait until it stops raining?" No, the invitation has been sent and it must be delivered - rain or shine. If they wait until the weather is just right, the invitation might be too late.

Did you know that Jesus has sent an invitation? His invitation says, **-S-** “If anyone is thirsty, **let him come to Me and drink.** He who believes in Me, as the Scripture

said, 'From his innermost being will flow rivers of living water.' " (John 7:37-38) Jesus has also decided who is to be invited. The invitation is addressed to "to those I call." Now it is time to deliver the invitation. **-S-** Do you know who Jesus has chosen to deliver the invitation? You and me!

In the verses of the Bible that we sometimes call "The Great Commission," found at the end of the Book of Matthew, Jesus told us to go everywhere and tell everyone about His love for them! Jesus has sent the invitation and He has given the job of delivering it to you and to me. Busy or not, rain or shine -- we must deliver the message before it's too late.

-S- Father, we thank You for your love. We thank You for Jesus who came so that we might have eternal life. We thank You for sending the Holy Spirit to be our comforter and guide. Help us to be faithful in telling others about Your love for them. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

-S- **The Uplifted Christ**

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A major survey by **-S-** The Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life in 2012 showed some startling results for the church in America. In the last 10 years the percentage of Americans who consider themselves unaffiliated with denominations has increased from 15% to 20%. While this statistic might not be bad, for it could mean more people are becoming part of non-denominational communities that are seeking to be biblically sound. It also indicated **-S-** fewer Americans continue to hold to traditional biblical beliefs of the Christian faith. This survey found that seven out of ten Americans who identify themselves as Christian believe **-S-** “that many religions can lead to eternal life and there is more than one way to interpret the Scriptures.” Six out of ten believe God is personal and the other 40% believe God is an impersonal force out in the universe.

Let me quote from The Pew Forum survey, “America is still mostly classified as Christian. Evangelicals make up 26.3% of churches, mainline Protestants 18.1%, and Catholics 23.9% (for a total of 68.3% of the population). However, of all the religious groups surveyed, **-S-** **ONLY** Mormons and Jehovah’s Witnesses contained a majority (*of their people*) who believe that their beliefs represents the ‘only’ way to heaven.” Over half, **-S-** 57%, of evangelical Protestant church members believe that other religions can lead a person to eternal life. The question we need to wrestle with is, **-S-** “How can the Church of our Lord Jesus impact the world to come to Christ if so few professing Christians understand, much less witness to the truth of their faith?” This is why at Canyon Bible we continue to

preach and study the scriptures for the truth of God - as God has given them and to live by and to witness God's truth to others who need Christ. We preach Christ; Christ of the scriptures, Christ crucified and Christ risen! **-B-** This is not only the job of the preacher to the church, but for each father, he is to teach his family and for each Christian to witness to the lost of the world.

Opening Prayer

I hope to answer some of the questions as to why we must preach Christ and Him crucified in our time this morning. The Apostle Mark recorded these very words of Jesus, **-S-** "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation. He who has believed and has been baptized shall be saved; but he who has disbelieved shall be condemned." (Mark 16:15-16) Let me ask each of you, are you prepared to **-S-** "... preach the gospel to all creation", will you share the gospel to anyone who will listen? Let me see if I can give you some compelling reasons to be a witness to a lost world.

Our text begins this morning in John chapter 8, verse 28 with the saying by Christ about Himself that He was to be **-S-** "lift up" or "lifted up" depending on your translation. Jesus would be "lifted up" referring to His crucifixion and from the crucifixion and resurrection there would be consequences and results that will last throughout history. The words "lifted up" are used extensively in the Old Testament – they are found in 147 verses. Jesus uses this phrase "lifted up" because it is rich in meaning that the Jews understand and now He adds new meaning to it. A good example from the Old Testament is when King David said, **-S-** "I shall lift up the cup of salvation and call upon the name of the LORD." (Psalm 116:13) David recognizes that salvation comes from the Lord, just as our

salvation comes from Jesus - who is Lord and was lifted upon the cross and He drink the “cup of salvation” - the bitterness of death. But, but, He rose from the grave to give salvation to all who “call upon the name of the LORD.” Jesus invites all those who the Father gives Him to call upon His name and be saved! King David’s understanding of His need for God and the salvation God alone can give is seen by what he later wrote, **-S-** “Let me hear Your lovingkindness in the morning; for I trust in You; teach me the way in which I should walk; for to You I lift up my soul.” (Psalm 143:8) David understood that unless he lifted up his very soul to the Lord there was no hope. What David wrote a millennium before Jesus’ birth was at the heart of His belief in Jesus as the Messiah. David believed in the Christ who was to come. The Lord and Savior, Jesus, now teaches that He will soon be **-S-** “lifted up” and fulfill what David wrote of a thousand years before He was born.

The Apostle John builds upon the truths of the Old Testament by quoting sayings of Jesus where the phrase being “lifted up” was used. John first records this in chapter 3 where Jesus says, **-S-** “As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up; so that whoever believes will in Him have eternal life.” (John 3:14 and 15) Brother David will refresh our memories of this story by reading out of **-S-** Numbers chapter 21, verses 4 to 9. We see in this passage that the people sinned against God and in their sin they died if bitten by the snakes. But, if they looked upon the standard God had Moses make of the bronze serpent - they lived. We too die in our sins unless we look upon Christ, for He is the standard God has set for the salvation of mankind. **-S-** Jesus was “lifted up” on the cross to die for the sins of all who believe in Him as the Christ.

Apostle John’s last reminder of Jesus speaking about being “lifted up” is found in chapter 12, **-S-** “And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to

Myself.” (John 12:32) Jesus was explaining to the people who heard the angel speak from heaven that His hour was approaching – to be “**lifted up**” referred to not only His being nailed to the cross and crucified, but that He would rise from the dead – “**lifted up**” up from the dead to overthrow Satan’s hold on mankind and by being “**lifted up**” to God the Father in heaven Jesus Christ would draw people to Himself and they would be saved. Here in chapter eight Jesus tells the Jewish leaders and the people, **-S-** “**When you lift up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am He, and I do nothing on My own initiative, but I speak these things as the Father taught Me.**” Once they crucify Jesus and He then rises from the dead they will know He is the long awaited Messiah.

These three passages bring us to the heart of the gospel and the consequences for mankind. I want to explore these three passages to help us understand the depth of what God did, and why we must share the gospel with the lost.

-S- Jesus Must Die

In verse 32 of chapter 12 Jesus says, **-S-** “... if I am **lifted up** from the earth, will **draw all men to Myself.**” Many believe that the preaching of the Gospel of Christ fulfills this and in part this is true. Men and women are drawn to Christ by the preaching of the Word. However, we know this is not the primary meaning by what follows in verse 33. The Apostle John explains Jesus’ meaning by writing, **-S-** “**But He (Jesus) was saying this to indicate the kind of death by which He was to die.**” Jesus would be nailed to a cross and “**lifted up**” before men. In our first verse of Jesus being lifted up in chapter three, **-S-** “**As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up; so that whoever believes will in Him have eternal life.**” do you see the phrase **-S-** “**even so must**”?

We can ask why is this so? Why was it necessary for Jesus to die? The easy answer is because it was part of God' eternal plan. I believe a fuller answer is that Jesus' death was necessary because nothing else would accomplish the salvation God offers to mankind. In the first place Jesus was the only person who has ever lived that was sinless and therefore, He uniquely was able to pay the price for mankind's sins. God requires a sacrifice to atone for one's sins; the sacrifice was to be without blemish or without sin. Animal sacrifices were temporary, but Jesus was the permanent and last sacrifice. It was absolutely necessary for Jesus to die, for no one else was able to die a death that would save sinners. It was also necessary for Jesus to die because nothing short of a crucified and risen Christ would be able to draw people to God. **-S-** Preach Christ crucified, preach Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit and men and women will come to Jesus – taking their focus off of their comfortable homes, nice cars and careers and they will believe and serve others in Jesus' name, they will use their vacations to attend bible conferences to bring their lives into focus and look upon the **-S-** "lifted up" Christ. They will go serve others on short-term mission trips and Jesus will be preached and Jesus will be "lifted up" by their serving others in His name. Because of their service and testimony people will come to know the "lifted up" and resurrected Christ. Jesus died so the world may have hope, eternal hope.

-S- Source of Knowledge

In our text this morning, verse 28, the emphasis is upon the fact that the Jewish leaders would come to know the truth about Jesus as the Christ only after they had Him killed. **-S-** It is only at the cross of Christ that the stubborn and rebellious will of mankind is conquered. Since a rebellious will is a major barrier for people to receive God's truth it is only at the cross - that God's light shines into the souls

of mankind. It is at the crucifixion that we see man's sinful brutal state and it is the resurrection that mankind sees the full truth and proof of Christ's divinity.

There are several Greek words that can be translated as "lifted up" and they are used in other places in scripture. However, here John uses **-S-** ὑψόω *hypsōō* which not only can be translated as **-S-** "lifted up", but also as **-S-** "to exalt" or **-S-** "to elevate". I believe John is thinking of and trying to communicate Christ's coming crucifixion and His resurrection; which was the first step in His glorification and these are proof of who Jesus is. Once Jesus is crucified, resurrected and has ascended to the Father these Jewish leaders will no longer be in ignorance of who Jesus is. Most will continue to reject Jesus as their Savior because of their pride and harden hearts, but some, some will give their souls to Christ. Praise God!

-S- History has a way of repeating itself if we do not learn from it. Today there has never been more evidence of the truth of the scriptures and who Jesus is. Yet, there are only a few who truly give their souls to Jesus, only a remnant will follow Him and live their lives in service of Him. Lack of knowledge is not a valid excuse, never has what Paul wrote to the Romans been more true, **-S-** "For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse." If one looks around how can they not see the fruit of the Creator? But, most people, like the Apostle Paul, have scales on their eyes and are blinded by their hearts of stone. Paul continues, saying, **-S-** "For even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God or give thanks, but they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened." (Romans 1:20-21) No person has an excuse to not see God's hand in all creation.

Those who reject God do so because of their darkened hearts and selfish ambitions.

-S- Great Attraction

James Montgomery Boice wrote of John chapter 12, verse 32, **-S-** “... is the most important, for it speaks of the drawing power of the uplifted Christ.” Verse 32 quotes Jesus as saying, **-S-** “And I, if I am **lifted up** from the earth, will draw all men to Myself.” Why is it that the crucified and risen Christ draws people to Himself? Reuben Torrey, who graduated from Yale in the late 1800s, when Yale was still training pastors in the truth of the scriptures, wrote, **-S-** “Christ crucified draws men unto Himself because Christ crucified meets the first, the deepest, the greatest and most fundamental need of man.” That greatest need of fallen mankind is – we need a Savior. We need a Savior from our guilt and sin. It does not matter from what race of mankind we come from; European, Asian, African, Indian or like myself a blend of many races – all people are rebellious in their sin and are in great need to be reconciled back to a holy God. No other religion in the world offers an atoning Savior, a risen Savior and a living Savior - only Christianity. **-B-** We saw in the survey that only the Mormons and Jehovah’s Witnesses have a majority of followers that believe their teachings are the only way back to God. The problem is they do not believe in the God or Christ of the Bible and therefore, are hopelessly lost in their false system of belief. History proves the Bible and Christianity to be true. The Scriptures, which have **not** had to be changed and corrected multiple times like these other religions, proved themselves to be true. Why is it then that so many who call themselves Christian are ineffective in sharing the gospel? Because they have not truly given their hearts, minds and souls to Christ and they do not live for Christ. They have used

the scriptures as a cafeteria plan to pick and choose what they want – the scriptures in their hand is ineffective for they do not believe in them as God has given them to us. “Lip service” does not gain one heaven. A person cannot keep one foot in the world and the other in Christianity for one cannot serve two masters. Jesus clearly stated the problem in the Gospel According to Matthew, **-S-** “No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth.” (Matthew 6:24) Jesus calls men and women to Himself and those who surrender and submit to Him as their Lord and Savior find the peace the world does not know.

-S- Drawn by Love

The crucified Christ on the Cross, **-S-** “lifted up” before mankind draws people to Himself because it reveals that Jesus loved all people so very much He was willing to die for their salvation. This makes me immediately think of 1 John 3:16, **-S-** “We know love by this, that He (*Jesus*) laid down His life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.” Are you sold out to Jesus to the point you would be willing to lay down your life that others might come to know Him? Does not Jesus’ commitment set the standard? As Paul wrote to people in Rome, **-S-** “But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.” (Romans 5:8) This is the kind of love, agape love, that draws people to Christ and Him as their Lord and Savior. **-S-** Christ “lifted up” on the cross is not easily dismissed as irrelevant. **-S-** Firstly, Jesus had to die upon the cross to fulfill the eternal plan of God the Father for the salvation for those He called. **-S-** Secondly, it is relevant because His death upon the cross, His resurrection and ascension prove beyond a shadow of doubt that Jesus is the

Christ. **-S-** Thirdly it is relevant because it is the Christ upon the cross, by His demonstrated love, that draws people, rebellious and sinful people, back to God.

Jesus said it best, as He always does, **-S-** “For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life.” (John 3:16) Simple and straight to the point, “whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life.” As we close our time this morning the Apostle John tells why Jesus did what He did. Let me close by reading three verses, **-S-** “So Jesus said, ‘When you lift up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am *He*, and I do nothing on My own initiative, but I speak these things as the Father taught Me. **-S-** And He who sent Me is with Me; He has not left Me alone, for I always do the things that are pleasing to Him.’ Why does Jesus speak these things, why will He be crucified? Because, **-S-** As He spoke these things, many came to believe in Him.” (John 8:28-30) Jesus has spoken this morning so that you and all who hear would come to believe in Him as their Lord and Savior. This world has never seen and will never see again such a Savior. **-S-** Believe and be saved. **-S-** Share the saving gospel of Christ with those who do not know Him.